THOUGHTS

UPON

SOME LATE PIECES,

PARTICULARLY

The DEATH OF ABEL,

AND

The MESSIAH.

I thought it but juſt to take notice of theſe things, as they ſerve to vindicate the opinion, which is growing pretty general, of the ſlender talents of this writer.

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Dial. V. P. 274.

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THOUGHTS

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The DEATH OF ABEL, [S. Gessner]

AND

The MESSIAH. [F. G. Klopstock.]

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THOUGHTS

UPON

SOME LATE PIECES.

The FIRST PAPER.

December 16, 1765.

THE form given to theſe papers is merely accidental, ariſing from the occaſion of them; from a requeſt made to have ſome pieces recommended for private family-reading: When, the following being thought of, the reaſons for the choice were afterwards explained.

Liſt of Books recommended.

The Bleſſed Bible.
The Book of Common-Prayer.
The Death of Abel, 5 Books.
The Meſſiah, 2 Vols.
Pamela, or Virtue rewarded, 4 Vols.
Clariſſa, or the Hiſtory of a young Lady, 7 Vols.
The Hiſtory of Sir Charles Grandiſon, 7 Vols.
The Female Spectator, 4 Vols.
Epiſtles for the Ladies, 2 Vols.
Familiar Letters, a ſmall Volume of 173 Letters.
Fables for the Female Sex.
Viſions in Verſe.
Dialogues concerning Education, 2 Vols.

—but this laſt is mentioned, chiefly for the ſake of four or five of the Dialogues, in which Cleora appears.

WHOEVER is acquainted with theſe pieces early in life, and acquaints herſelf with them thoroughly; and reads them over at leaſt once a year; and is never tired of them, but ſtill reſumes them, and ſtill reads them; till ſhe is perfect miſtreſs of each of theſe pieces, and has a full comprehenſion of them; ſo that ſhe can readily call to mind, or lead into diſcourſe any material circumſtance in them: Such a young perſon will be timely inſtructed in true piety and virtue; will ſcarce ever be at a loſs for any point of conduct, great or ſmall; will have a competent ſtore of real knowledge; and will find herſelf gradually enabled to write and to diſcourſe, to live and to die, like a Chriſtian.

THOUGH particular pieces are mentioned, yet others are by no means meant to be excluded, but left to be added, as different

choice

choice and prudence may direct. Theſe however might ſupply a year's general reading: —Pamela, and Clariſſa, and Sir Charles Grandiſon will employ a whole winter's evenings; —the Death of Abel, and the New Meſſiah, may be read, alternately, before the Euchariſt, and the latter always in Paſſion-week;— the reſt, the Female Spectator, Female Fables, Epiſtles, Viſions, and Dialogues, will ſuffice for the ſummer-ſeaſon, when there are more calls for female recreations, and fewer hours for ſedentary calmneſs. Above all, the Bleſſed Bible muſt be ever under peruſal, and more than Common-prayer never be neglected.

IF ſomething of this ſort, ſome ſuch courſe were received in private houſes, it might prove one help towards altering the times, and would greatly aſſiſt public teaching;—

it would ſupplant pieces of dubious tendency, and guard leiſure hours from trifling or fatal amuſements;—would fix the ſerious, engage the careleſs, and guide the unexperienced; and might preſerve or recall many from the dangers of their walk here, and of the cloſe of it hereafter.

SUCH at leaſt are the ſentiments of one, who would rejoice to become the loweſt, the meaneſt inſtrument of ſo ſalutary an endeavour.

The

The SECOND PAPER.

BUT, ſince opinions and judgments differ, it may be required, why the pieces, mentioned in the former paper, are there recommended with ſuch warmth and earneſtneſs; and therefore ſome account of thoſe pieces ſeems ſomewhat neceſſary.

NOW the real reaſons of this matter are very plain ones. Thoſe pieces are indeed the moſt maſterly in the Engliſh language; above twenty of the volumes carry on one unvaried important purpoſe; and moſt of them came from one and the ſame ſingle hand.

THIS laſt, it is likely, will be received with ſurpriſe; the public makes a great ſecret of it; for the public generally takes ſuch matters upon truſt. Few have leiſure or care

to

to enquire; and none, as far as I have obſerved, have yet examined theſe pieces according to their reſpective merit.

HENCE it is, that *The Death of Abel*, and *The New Meſſiah*, thoſe finiſhed drawings, which may be ſhewn with Milton's, upon his own ground, are given to two German maſters with hard names;—tho', it is probable, the names are only meant as a trial of the taſte of the times; and for a ſtroke of raillery on that nation, which was never eminent for epic poeſy.

HENCE *The Dialogues concerning Education*, unattended at the firſt with name of author or editor, do ſtill ſeem to miſs their public way to their real owner; tho' he has offered himſelf, with only a ſlight *nominal* variation, in one leading character in thoſe converſations; and hath ſhaded Mr. Addi-

ſon under another of them. Still none conſiders in his heart, who, and what manner of man he was, that could plan, and could ſuſtain thoſe Dialogues.

So *Clementina*, and *Clariſſa*, and *Pamela* are fixed in the poſſeſſion, or found in the collection of a printer; a perſon undoubtedly of true worth and goodneſs, and to whom the age has great obligations for his ſhare in bringing thoſe works to its knowledge:—Yet, with the utmoſt deference to others, we venture to avow, that the public is even yet to look out for a hand, equal to thoſe amiable and perfect productions.

And ſuch, if ever man was, our own times ſaw.—One only was capable in our days; and therefore He it was who formed all theſe works.

This

THIS reaſoning may indeed be diſputed; but upon reflexion it will be found deciſive. However, ſince the Deſigner has thrown a ſhade over his own perſon, let none preſume to remove the veil raſhly.—Only let us be permitted to attempt a diſcovery by outer circumſtances; and by attending a few plain lines of a free, tho' faint reſemblance of Him.

HE was the *Raphael* of our days and nation; a creature little lower than the angels; the juſteſt thinker, the fineſt writer, the firmeſt friend, the beſt of ſons,. one of the beſt of Chriſtians, and beſt of men.—And now a few words of his works; chiefly with regard to their godlike deſign and tendency.

BE it however before-hand agreed, that ſuch a mind could not miſtake the times he was fallen into.—In truth, he ſurveyed the

age with a ſteady eye; ſaw all its wants, and felt all its miſeries:—He diſcerned it to be the ſeed-time of Deiſm, and knew the fatal fruits of that dangerous plant. He aroſe therefore, like ſome guardian ſpirit, milder than Mr. Addiſon's Campaign-angel, to ſave a land. Then it was he quitted the paths of Fancy, to ſettle upon the grounds of Reaſon and Religion. This engagement he took early with the public—much earlier than is generally underſtood; and under it perfected all his later pieces; eſpecially the immediate ſubjects of the following papers.

Father and Former of the Britiſh muſe,
Truth o'er the iſle his patriot plans diffuſe;
And we with vent'rous hand, tho' weak eſſay,
But cull his ſweets, or point his glorious ray,
Glorious, and guide to everlaſting day *.

* From Lucretius. See Mr. Creech, at the beginning of book III.

The

The THIRD PAPER.

THE pieces, now to be ſpoken of, may rank, as we ſaid, with the moſt perfect of the preſent age. It would be eaſy to point out various and uncommon perfections in all of them; but it would break the preſent purpoſe, which is only concerned with the chief deſign in each piece; and to open it juſt as far as is neceſſary to ſhew ſuch deſign.

THE *Death of Abel* is the moſt finiſhed human copy of primæval nature any-where extant. Its language, juſt raiſed above the common line, exactly reaches the ſubject; throwing a luſtre over numerous pleaſing images, new-minted from the virgin-earth. It traces, and often gains upon, Milton in his very brighteſt tracts; and moves on, un-

clouded by any of the ſpots in that moſt glorious luminary. But its characteriſtic diſtinction is devotion. It was intended to ſhew, in all its circumſtances, the firſt ſad conſequence of the Fall. For this reaſon, the diſtreſs of Eve is there ſhaded ſo very deep: Her lamentation is always loud; it is ſtill renewed, ſtill burſts and guſhes out upon every occaſion; and flows again, and fills the eye, and raiſes the ſprings of every feeling boſom. Yet pride had ſlighted this firſt of truths, and ſelf-ſufficiency almoſt had effaced it. To recover it therefore, and impreſs it anew, and reſtore its due moment over the mind, is the real deſign of *The Death of Abel.*

THE *Meſſiah* exhibits the Great Satisfaction. Of this piece it is difficult to ſpeak few words, or to find any worthy of it.—It may aſſiſt ſomewhat, in reading it, to obſerve that the

plan,

plan, extending, beyond the limits of creation, up to the throne of God, is ſo conducted from its very opening, in all its ſolemn ſteps over the habitable globe, to realms of bliſs and regions of darkneſs, and millions of miniſtering ſpirits; the whole is ſo conducted as to cloſe in one ſingle object, the patient Saviour upon the croſs.—To this aweful ſpectacle all the paths lead;—this governs, unites, and finiſhes the plan in all its parts. The ſentiments, alluſions, and modes of ſpeech are all eaſtern, and Jewiſh, and ſcriptural; what elſe could they be? While, the momentous point being the Satisfaction, That is exquiſitely imagined, or, rather to ſay humbly hoped, to extend even to a fallen ſpirit; whoſe ſtate is drawn, but his doom undecided. Atonement! the Great Atonement is the wonder! That fixes the attention of the celeſtial ſpirits, and of the whole

aſſembled

aſſembled race of Eve; fills the thoughts and flows in the diſcourſe of Portia and Mary, and the ſtrains of Deborah and Miriam, and thro' all the melancholy ſoothing ſcenes of the New Muſe of Sion.

TRUE religion opened, human life is man's next concern; its conduct, its great buſineſs, and various events: And three favourite pieces are given us, which lay out, into three different views, the walk of life; but theſe may beſt employ another paper, and ſo end this deſign.

The

The FOURTH PAPER.

UPON Originals, ſo long under the public eye as Clementina, and Clariſſa, and Pamela, it will ſcarce be expected that any thing new can be obſerved; unleſs it ſhould appear ſuch, to mark their diſtinct Orders, their relative Connexion, and mutual bearings to each other.

THE intent of *Pamela* is to ſhew the genuine force of virtue; not ſtationed to advantage, but diſcovered in the vale of life, in the lowlineſs of a hand-maiden. A fine pleaſing form, attended only by innocence and caution, moving with ſteady ſtep over the dubious ſtage of life, up to the higher ranks; ſhe ſtill continuing the ſame humble, amiable, worthy creature; ſhedding her in-

fluence on all hands, and fulfilling all duties; exampling prudence, counſelling doubt, confirming goodneſs, reclaiming error, comforting diſtreſs, adorning devotion; — the joy and boaſt of her friends, and the bleſſing of this world. Such is Pamela!

VERY different from her is the appearance of *Clariſſa*. She ariſes, like the morning-ſun over the upper-lands, all ſerenity and brightneſs; but ſhe is unexpectedly clouded, and her path darkened; thrown out of her ſphere of protection by one falſe ſtep; acquainted with ſorrows, becauſe diſobedient to one paternal command; enduring reproach, beſet with injuries, and reduced to a ſtate, that hath no form nor comelineſs in it; in a word, troubled, perplexed, diſaſtered in this ſpot of time, but triumphant in the clear eye of eternity.—Such are the lights

and

and ſhades that neceſſarily form a Clariſſa! for how otherwiſe can ſhe repreſent, as ſhe is intended to repreſent, the real force of Chriſtianity?

THE Limner, whoever he was, having ſketched theſe fair proportions of virtue and revealed faith, ſpread his canvas anew; and, again ſurveying man, and his wants, executed a draught (pictures of life and manners they are ſomewhere called) the moſt comprehenſive and highly finiſhed, that ever came out of the hand of mere man;—I except no age or nation—and ſhall be eaſily underſtood to ſpeak of Sir Charles Grandiſon; not fully however, as I could wiſh, but according to the meaſure and meaning of theſe papers.

THE Hiſtory of *Sir Charles Grandiſon* was formed to ſhew the true force of religion *in general*.—The writer had obſerved, that in his days it was become neceſſary, that religion itſelf ſhould be recalled; that it ſhould be ſhewn, that religion hath a native ſpring of its own; and that an attention to ſomething hereafter is a natural noble principle. This is the leading truth that ſtands forward amid the various graceful group, that form the circle of Sir Charles Grandiſon.

IN this view of the piece, the ſeeming principal figure is but of ſecond conſideration. Sir Charles has every grace that can adorn life, and every virtue that perfects a rational being.—He reveres a God, is thankful for a Saviour, and bleſſes all about him. Yet, lovely, and commanding, and compaſſed with glory as his portrait is, it is but the

ſecond

ſecond object in this painting;—Clementina is the firſt, holding up the claim and power of religion.

If any doubt this, let him only conſider that character attentively. The attachments of Clementina are not to the modes of the Romiſh worſhip, but to religion itſelf: That has, upon all occaſions, her ſupreme conſideration. Other characters in the piece have likewiſe lively colourings of religion, but its full ſheddings are around Clementina. Her ſuperior duties have taken ſo faſt hold upon her, that they are become complete commanding habits.—They ſtill take the lead; form and govern her whole diſpoſition; ſupport her dignity, guard her delicacy, and ſecure her footing, when even her reaſon has given way: A ſingle glance of them annihilates all human regards; and

they

they prevail againſt nature, paſſion, and death.

How much more might be ſaid of each of theſe pieces! but our deſign muſt be kept unbroken. This was merely to get theſe pieces conſidered as parts of one whole, by bringing them into the ſame line of view; and to call upon the wiſe, and the worthy, to contemplate the lateſt drawings of a Raphael; thoſe that had his hand and his heart; thoſe to which he gave a perfection, that will laſt, till piety and goodneſs, virtue and religion, are finally conſummated; till all is finiſhed, and no further aids needed, but the flock and fold led by the Lamb himſelf for ever and ever.

So thinks the editor of theſe papers; ſo he wiſhes others to think; a few ſo thinking

would in time, and by degrees, prevail. At preſent the age is not at leiſure; it is otherwiſe engaged. Pleaſure's holiday is too loud for theſe plain ſober ſounds: Happy, if they might reach a few, if they ſhould benefit any one individual!

FINIS.

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